

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN
SOUTHERN DIVISION

THOMAS GREEN,

Plaintiff,

No. 13-12305

v.

District Judge Paul D. Borman
Magistrate Judge R. Steven Whalen

TIMOTHY JOHNSON, ET AL.,

Defendants.

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REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Plaintiff Thomas Green, a prison inmate in the custody of the Michigan Department of Corrections (“MDOC”), has filed a *pro se* civil complaint under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, naming as Defendants the MDOC and Timothy Johnson, an MDOC employee. Before the Court is the MDOC’s Motion to Dismiss [Doc. #15], which has been referred for a Report and Recommendation pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(B). For the reasons discussed below, I recommend that the motion be GRANTED, and that the MDOC be DISMISSED WITH PREJUDICE.

I. FACTS

Plaintiff’s complaint is centered on a claim of denial of his First Amendment right to access the courts. He has sued Defendant Timothy Green in both his official and personal capacity. He claims that Green, a mail room employee at the Ryan Correctional Facility, held on to Plaintiff’s pleadings to the Michigan Supreme Court for four days, resulting in an untimely filing, resulting in the Supreme Court rejecting his case. Plaintiff has also sued the MDOC, a State of Michigan Agency. The MDOC moves for dismissal based on Eleventh Amendment immunity.

II. STANDARD OF REVIEW

Fed.R.Civ.P. 12(b)(6) provides for dismissal of a complaint “for failure of the pleading to state a claim upon which relief can be granted.” Rule 12(b) also provides that if, on consideration of a motion under paragraph (6), “matters outside the pleadings are presented to and not excluded by the court, the motion shall be treated as one for summary judgment and disposed of as provided in Rule 56 (summary judgment).” In assessing a Rule 12(b)(6) motion, the court accepts the plaintiff’s factual allegations as true, and asks whether, as a matter of law, the plaintiff is entitled to legal relief. *Rippy v. Hattaway*, 270 F.3d 416, 419 (6th Cir. 2001).

The United States Supreme Court has modified the standard for determining whether a complaint is subject to dismissal under Fed.R.Civ.P. 12(b)(6). In *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S 544, 127 S.Ct. 1955, 167 L.Ed.2d 929 (2007), the Court, construing the requirements of Fed.R.Civ.P. 8(a)(2), held that although a complaint need not contain detailed factual allegations, its “[f]actual allegations must be enough to raise a right to relief above the speculative level...on the assumption that all the allegations in the complaint are true.” *Id.*, 127 S.Ct. at 1964-65 (internal citations and quotation marks omitted). Further, “a plaintiff’s obligation to provide the grounds of his entitlement to relief requires more than labels and conclusions, and a formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action will not do.” *Id.* (Internal citations and quotation marks omitted). *See also Association of Cleveland Fire Fighters v. City of Cleveland, Ohio* 502 F.3d 545, 548 (6th Cir. 2007). Stated differently, a complaint must “state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.” *Twombly*, at 1974.

In *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 129 S.Ct. 1937, 173 L.Ed.2d 868 (2009), the Court explained and expanded on what it termed the “two-pronged approach” of

Twombly. First, it must be determined whether a complaint contains factual allegations, as opposed to legal conclusions. “Threadbare recitals of the elements of a cause of action, supported by mere conclusory statements, do not suffice.” *Id.*, 129 S.Ct. at 1949, citing *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555. Second, the facts that are pled must show a “plausible” claim for relief, which the Court described as follows:

“Determining whether a complaint states a plausible claim for relief will, as the Court of Appeals observed, be a context-specific task that requires the reviewing court to draw on its judicial experience and common sense. But where the well-pleaded facts do not permit the court to infer more than the mere possibility of misconduct, the complaint has alleged—but it has not ‘shown[n]’—‘that the pleader is entitled to relief.’” 129 S.Ct. at 1950 (Internal citations omitted).

III. DISCUSSION

I can say this no better than did Judge Quist in *Ghee v. Woods*, 2013 WL 3466869, at *3 (W.D. Mich. 2013):

“In addition, Plaintiff may not maintain a § 1983 action against the Michigan Department of Corrections. Regardless of the form of relief requested, the states and their departments are immune under the Eleventh Amendment from suit in the federal courts, unless the state has waived immunity or Congress has expressly abrogated Eleventh Amendment immunity by statute. *See Pennhurst State Sch. & Hosp. v. Halderman*, 465 U.S. 89, 98–101, 104 S.Ct. 900, 79 L.Ed.2d 67 (1984); *Alabama v. Pugh*, 438 U.S. 781, 782, 98 S.Ct. 3057, 57 L.Ed.2d 1114 (1978); *O’Hara v. Wigginton*, 24 F.3d 823, 826 (6th Cir.1994). Congress has not expressly abrogated Eleventh Amendment immunity by statute, *Quern v. Jordan*, 440 U.S. 332, 341, 99 S.Ct. 1139, 59 L.Ed.2d 358 (1979), and the State of Michigan has not consented to civil rights suits in federal court. *Abick v. Michigan*, 803 F.2d 874, 877 (6th Cir.1986). In numerous unpublished opinions, the Sixth Circuit has specifically held that the MDOC is absolutely immune from suit under the Eleventh Amendment. *See, e.g., McCoy v. Michigan*, 369 F. App’x 646, 653–54 (6th Cir. Mar.12, 2010); *Turnboe v. Stegall*, No. 00–1182, 2000 WL1679478, at *2 (6th Cir. Nov. 1, 2000). In addition, the State of Michigan (acting through the Michigan Department of Corrections) is not a “person” who may be sued under § 1983 for money damages. *See Lapidus v. Bd. of Regents*, 535 U.S. 613, 617, 122 S.Ct. 1640, 152 L.Ed.2d 806 (2002) (citing *Will v. Mich. Dep’t of State Police*, 491 U.S. 58, 66, 109 S.Ct. 2304, 105 L.Ed.2d 45 (1989)). Therefore, the Court dismisses the Michigan Department of Corrections.”

For the same reasons, and based on the same authority, the Eleventh Amendment precludes Plaintiff's claims against the MDOC, and hence its Motion to Dismiss should be granted.

IV. CONCLUSION

I therefore recommend that the MDOC's Motion to Dismiss [Doc. #15] be GRANTED.

Any objections to this Report and Recommendation must be filed within fourteen (14) days of service of a copy hereof as provided for in 28 U.S.C. §636(b)(1) and E.D. Mich. LR 72.1(d)(2). Failure to file specific objections constitutes a waiver of any further right of appeal. *Thomas v. Arn*, 474 U.S. 140, 106 S.Ct. 466, 88 L.Ed.2d 435 (1985); *Howard v. Secretary of HHS*, 932 F.2d 505 (6th Cir. 1991); *United States v. Walters*, 638 F.2d 947 (6th Cir. 1981). Filing of objections which raise some issues but fail to raise others with specificity will not preserve all the objections a party might have to this Report and Recommendation. *Willis v. Secretary of HHS*, 931 F.2d 390, 401 (6th Cir. 1991); *Smith v. Detroit Fed'n of Teachers Local 231*, 829 F.2d 1370, 1373 (6th Cir. 1987). Pursuant to E.D. Mich. LR 72.1(d)(2), a copy of any objections is to be served upon this Magistrate Judge.

Within fourteen (14) days of service of any objecting party's timely filed objections, the opposing party may file a response. The response shall be not more than twenty (20) pages in length unless by motion and order such page limit is extended by the court. The response shall address specifically, and in the same order raised, each issue contained within

the objections.

Dated: January 14, 2014

s/ R. Steven Whalen
R. STEVEN WHALEN
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

I hereby certify that a copy of the foregoing order was sent to parties of record on January 15, 2014, electronically and/or by U.S. mail.

s/Michael Williams
Case Manager for the
Honorable R. Steven Whalen